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MIDDLE EAST - AFRICA - SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

CONTENTS

Libya-Egypt: Both Sides May be Trying to Manipulate Border Tribes	1
Iran: The New Party	3
Middle East: PLO Seeks Observer Status at UNESCO	5
Jordan: Construction of a Large Yarmuk River Dam Under Consideration	6

Apr 24, 1975

SECRET

SECRET

Libya-Egypt

*Both Sides May be Trying to
Manipulate Border Tribes*

The dispute between Libya and Egypt that flared up last week has involved charges from both sides that the other is subverting the loyalties of tribal groups that live astride their common border. The charges are not new and, in fact, have arisen on almost every occasion of intense feuding between the neighboring countries. We have no evidence that border tribes have engaged in subversive activity against either Tripoli or Cairo; nevertheless, both regimes apparently believe a potential danger exists and may be moving to gain the advantage.

1 The tribes in question are collectively known as the Saadi. Their current allegiance is complicated by the historical misfortunes of their original homeland of Cyrenaica, the eastern province of present-day Libya. Many of the Saadi tribes were driven from Cyrenaica into Egypt during the early nineteenth century by the Turkish Caramanli Pasha of Tripoli. After years of resistance to Egyptian authority, many of the tribes were finally forced to give up their nomadic lifestyle for a sedentary existence, some settling as far east as the Egyptian delta region. By rough estimates nearly a million descendants of Saadi tribesmen in Egypt still identify with their original homeland, but only about 100,000 of these maintain close ties with their Cyrenaican cousins.

Tripoli and Cairo seem most concerned about the Awlad Ali, a tribe located primarily in the Egyptian Western Desert in an area stretching between Sollum and Alexandria. The Awlad Ali have maintained relatively strong tribal cohesion and apparently roam freely across the Libyan border to areas inhabited by a smaller Libyan branch of the tribe.

The Awlad Ali and other Saadi tribes with Cyrenaican origins have clung to nomadic traditions and probably have little sense of political association

(Continued)

Apr 24, 1975

1

SECRET

SECRET

3 with either Libya or Egypt. Cyrenaicans have historically felt a keen sense of independence, marked by long-standing antipathy for Egyptians and more recently characterized by bitter antagonism toward the Tripoli-based Libyan government. These negative sentiments--if successfully manipulated--could be dangerous liabilities or useful assets to Cairo or Libya, and both capitals have stakes in bidding for tribal support.

3 Until recently, this competition seemed to involve little more than propaganda posturing, but over the last month both sides reportedly have taken more serious action.

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25X1C

2

1

Apr 24, 1975

2

SECRET

SECRET

Iran

The New Party

1 The Iranian National Resurgence Party (NRP), which is to be Iran's sole political party, will soon be operating. The establishment of the NRP began last month after the Shah declared without warning that Iran was to have only one political party. All other parties were dissolved and their newspapers closed. The Shah made clear that all who wished to participate in the country's economic progress and political process would have to join the new organization; those who did not would be regarded as enemies of the regime.

2 The NRP will hold its first congress early next month. Major occupational groups, such as teachers and farmers, and geographic regions will be represented. According to the Shah's orders, however, only 10 of Iran's 60 senators and 40 of its 268 parliamentary deputies will be among the delegates.

1,3 The limits on the participation of politicians reflects the Shah's reported desire to bring new faces--especially intellectuals and younger technocrats--into national politics and his intention to prevent the new party from becoming a mirror image of the old ruling party, the Iran Novin party. Although the Shah designated Prime Minister Hoveyda, who served as head of the former ruling party, to lead the NRP, the Shah is reportedly displeased with Hoveyda for trying to move Iran Novin party hacks into top NRP jobs. A special high-level group has reportedly met at the Shah's direction to ensure that new men are not passed over. Represented in the group are members of Iran's university community, and a "rehabilitated" student critic and alleged former communist, who is now a leader of the younger elements in the new party.

(Continued)

Apr 24, 1975

3

SECRET

SECRET

2 University leaders and intellectuals also have been encouraged by Empress Farah to play a greater role in Iranian politics. Her recent speech recommending that they become more active was given front page press treatment.

3 Iran's university community and Iranian students abroad have traditionally been a major source of anti-regime activity and fertile ground for recruitment into dissident, and even terrorist, organizations. The Shah seems increasingly irritated by opposition or indifference from these people. In response, he now seems deliberately to be enlarging their role in the new party in an attempt to co-opt them into the system or to force them into such open opposition that he may brand them traitors.

4 The Shah in the past has frequently and successfully used the tactic of co-opting opponents. Traditionally, he has been reluctant to suppress forcefully centers of opposition before they have been given several opportunities to "reform".

5 Nevertheless, the threat of more forceful action remains. The Shah's remarks about joining the new party "or else"--and even some of the Empress' recent remarks--read like warnings that the time to choose is at hand. His speech establishing the party rather clearly defined the limits of allowable criticism. Debate over means apparently will be encouraged, but criticism of the monarchy, the constitution, or the domestic goals set forth by the Shah in his "White Revolution" will not be permitted. (SECRET/NFD/NDA/CD)

25X1A

Apr 24, 1975

4

SECRET

SECRET

Middle East

PLO Seeks Observer Status at UNESCO

The Palestine Liberation Organization is seeking permanent observer status at the Paris-based UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as a means of further expanding its international representation and acceptability. The PLO and its supporters are lobbying for support to raise the issue directly at the May meeting of the organization's executive board. A direct request by the PLO last March for such status was refused by UNESCO's director general, but he has no legal authority to prevent board action on the request.

2 The question of the PLO's status can be added as a new item to the meeting's agenda by a simple majority vote. Beyond that point, however, the executive board's authority to grant such status--without the approval of UNESCO's general conference--is unclear. UNESCO has formerly permitted only non-member states--such as the Holy See--and intergovernmental organizations to appoint permanent observer delegates; no national liberation movement has ever applied for such standing.

3.4 The PLO and their front men in Paris, the Tunisian delegates, may be encountering more opposition to their proposal than they had expected. The black Africans, in particular, are concerned that introduction of this issue, coming so soon after the controversy aroused by the actions taken against Israel at the November meeting, could further damage the organization, which, for the first time in its history, is headed by an African.
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25X1A

Apr 24, 1975

5

SECRET

SECRET

Jordan

*Construction of a Large Yarmuk River Dam
Under Consideration*

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Since the early 1950's Jordan has been interested in harnessing the waters of the Yarmuk River, a great portion of which runs unused into the Jordan River south of Lake Tiberias. The first step toward controlling the Yarmuk was taken in 1966 when Jordan began construction of the Khalid bin al Walid Dam near the town of Al Mukaybah. Construction was halted by the 1967 war, when Israel occupied the Golan Heights side of the river. In spite of Jordanian hopes, no agreement has been reached with Israel that would permit construction on the dam to resume. There are indications that Jordan is abandoning hopes of resuming work on the Khalid Dam and is thinking of building at a site upriver that is about 7 miles east of Israeli occupied territory.

The new site is at the Maqarin railway station some 14 miles upstream from the Khalid site. This site was first proposed by two US engineering companies in a 1955 study of the Yarmuk-Jordan River Basin.

Early last month, the Jordanian government asked the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and AID to consider financing the construction of the Maqarin Dam. Jordanian specialists have completed a review of previous studies on the site, and IBRD and AID are conducting negotiations for a feasibility study. IBRD is apparently considering committing funds for construction beginning in fiscal year 1977.

The Maqarin Dam will be an earth and rockfill multipurpose structure furnishing water for year-round irrigation in the Jordan Valley and hydro-electric power for Jordan and Syria. The Jordanians are anxious to complete their plans for development

(Continued)

Apr 24, 1975

6

SECRET

SECRET

12345 in the Jordan Valley, but they cannot do it without
a large dam on the Yarmuk River. The loss of the
Khalid Dam was a disappointment to them, and they
can be expected to push hard for support to construct
the Maqarin Dam. (CONFIDENTIAL)



25X1

Apr 24, 1975

7

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